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OF CLASS STRUGGLE?

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE
THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL
SOCIETY ON MARCH 15, 1923

By ARTHUR CHARLES COLE, PH.D.
Professor of American History
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INTRODUCTION

This lecture is a by-product of research work in the fields of southern history and of Illinois history. Several years of effort at running down clues of varying significance are represented in this little study. The author hopes that his results will be regarded by his brethren of the historical gild as worthy of the time and energy expended in such tasks.

The author is impressed with an interesting parallelism between the reflections of Lincoln upon the slavery issue and the views of extreme pro-slavery propagandists. To be sure, the one represented the ideals of the North and of freedom while the others were contending for "southern rights." Lincoln's conclusions can be shown to have been based to a large degree upon his reaction to the extremes of the pro-slavery argument. With such critics as feel that to attribute to these forces the immediate and sole inspiration for the "house divided" statement is too far-fetched, the author has no quarrel. He does believe that the evidence submitted warrants the conclusion that there was at least a subconscious influence working in that direction.

Lincoln was in no sense a spokesman of labor-class consciousness. He was more the middle-class liberal influenced by the frontier to a strong human sympathy for those who were oppressed or threatened with oppression. Through the greater part of his career he was more the philosopher than the man of action. Indeed, his greatness must in large part rest upon the depth of his understanding. This paper raises the question as to whether or not Lincoln may have made some slight contribution to the materials for a philosophy of history.

LINCOLN'S "HOUSE DIVIDED" SPEECH

On that memorable day of June 17, 1858, when Abraham Lincoln was honored by the indorsement of his senatorial aspirations by the Illinois State Republican Convention, in a carefully prepared speech delivered without dependence upon manuscript or notes, he uttered these prophetic words:

"A house divided against itself cannot stand." I believe this government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.¹

What then did Lincoln mean? That was the question that was raised at once by those who had committed themselves to accepting his political generalship,² as well as by those who hoped to humble him—if possible to condemn him out of his own mouth.

Lincoln's "house divided" doctrine is open to two interpretations: as constituting a prophecy that sought to penetrate the mystery of the future on the basis of past and present forces, or a program for practical political endeavor. Both prophecy and political leadership may be grounded upon careful observation of things as they have come to be, or may rest upon nothing more substantial than fanatical enthusiasm and dauntless courage.

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* (new and enlarged edition, New York, 1905), III, 2.

² Gilbert A. Tracy, *Uncollected Letters of Abraham Lincoln* (Boston, 1917), p. 86; cf. also p. 132.

Contemporaries, startled by the apparent implications of the speech, were wont to assume that it furnished a goal for the revolutionary efforts of a reformer. Lincoln's opponents claimed against him proof of his participation in a propaganda to free all the slaves; thus would he do violence to the constitutional guaranties of the planter's rights. His political rival, Stephen A. Douglas, sought to make him the spokesman of a sectional abolition Republicanism; the "little giant" challenged the "house divided" speech as in essence a plan to array section against section, to incite a war of extinction on "negro equality" ground. Lincoln seemed to have placed himself in the company of that arch apostle of "Black Republicanism," William H. Seward; indeed, Seward almost simultaneously announced that the forces of freedom and slavery were coming together in an "irrepressible conflict."

At this stage it seems proper to state the rôle which Lincoln had come to play in the antislavery movement. His record in no sense showed a disposition to join hands with those who sought the complete extinction of slavery. The young product of the Kentucky log cabin entered the political arena as a representative of the contemporary party of "wealth, intelligence, and respectability." He did not, however, completely share the natural disgust of the propertied classes for the frontier brand of democracy of which he was so much a part. Essentially a middle-of-the-roader in his attitude toward slavery, he declared in his famous protest of 1837 that "the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils."¹

He could not even understand the militant idealists who were content to ignore even political methods in their attempts to arouse the conscience of the slaveholder to a

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, I, 51-52.

sense of the guilt of holding a human brother in bondage. Lincoln did not appreciate, till his own decrepit party was tottering with premature senility, the importance of a political alignment on the slavery issue. He scorned the Free Soil Party as offering wares, like the Yankee peddler's pantaloons, "large enough for any man, small enough for any boy," yet the charge could as truthfully have been made against the ambidextrous organization to which he still proudly clung. His uncompromising hostility to the spread of slavery made his leadership strongly desired by those who wished to utilize the popular reaction against the Kansas-Nebraska Act to organize a new political party. Yet in October, 1854, the wily Whig leader left Springfield for the open prairies of central Illinois to escape a possible connection with the Republican Convention, called together by the antislavery idealists, and later repudiated the unauthorized use of his name on the Republican State Committee. The decadence of the Whig Party soon left him free for a new political alignment, and the logic of events led him into a prominent part in the Republican movement. His purpose, however, was to control it and to direct it along conservative lines. In the storm and stress of Civil War, he was reluctant about adopting abolition ground. Even after he had assumed responsibility for an emancipation policy, and had passed on to his reward, he was exposed to the scornful words of an abolition crusader from Massachusetts: "Lincoln was an emancipationist by compulsion. . . . Lincoln was made a saint and liberator in spite of himself; he was cuffed into the calendar; he was kicked into glory."¹

Soon after his Springfield speech, Lincoln became very much annoyed—he said in one case, "mortified"—at the way in which his friends seemed to construe his speech. To John L. Scripps, the Chicago journalist and his first biog-

¹ *Columbus Crisis*, January 24, 1866.

rapher, he wrote a careful correction on June 23, six days after the delivery of the speech. He tried to make it entirely clear that he had not asserted or even intimated "any power or purpose, to interfere with slavery in the states where it exists."¹ Similar efforts to clarify his position were forced from him by Douglas in the great duel which they fought over the state of Illinois. Yet, a period as late as February, 1860, found Lincoln still vexed by uncertainties as to his position. He wrote in reply to an inquiry:

It puzzles me to make my meaning plainer. Look over it carefully and conclude I meant all I said, and did not mean anything I did not say, and you will have my meaning. Douglas attacked me upon this, saying it was a declaration of war between the slave and free states. You will perceive, I said no such thing, and I assure you I thought of no such thing. If I had said I believe the Government cannot last always half-slave and half-free, would you understand it any better than you do? Endure permanently and last always have exactly the same meaning.²

Little direct evidence remains to indicate Lincoln's exact intention in planning his famous utterance. The idea, whatever his purpose in exploiting it, was not new to him. Nearly three years before, in a letter that carefully analyzed the state of the slavery controversy, he concluded: "Our political problem now is, 'Can we as a nation continue together permanently—forever—half-slave and half-free?' The problem is too mighty for me—may God, in his mercy, superintend the solution."³ He is said to have incorporated his negative answer to this question in his speech at the Bloomington convention which organized the Republican Party in Illinois, but to have abandoned its later use in deference to the protests of certain party leaders who objected to the implications of his statement.⁴ The value

¹ Tracy, *Uncollected Letters of Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 86-87.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 132-33.

³ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, II, 280-81.

⁴ William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, *Herndon's Lincoln* (3 vols. Chicago, 1890), II, 398-99; Ward H. Lamon, *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Boston, 1872), p. 398.

of this evidence is to suggest that the "house divided" idea was developed independently of the remaining remarks of the Springfield speech.

Herndon leaves an account of the circumstances of the writing of the speech. Various memoranda were made on stray envelopes and scraps of paper and stowed away in his hat, until he was at length able to prepare a connected speech. While making his draft he refused to submit it to Jesse K. Dubois, a party associate, because, as he is said to have later explained to Dubois: "I knew that if I read the passage about the 'house divided against itself' to you, you would ask me to change or modify it, and that I was determined not to do. I had willed it so, and was willing to perish with it."¹ In advance of his speech, however, he seems to have submitted it to Herndon and later to a dozen or more friends. At first, Herndon says, he raised the question whether it was wise or politic to utilize the celebrated figure of speech; Lincoln replied that it was "the truth of all human experience for six thousand years," and that he was ready to stand or fall politically upon that ground. In the later conference, each person criticized the remark as at least ahead of the time, until finally in his turn Herndon said: "Lincoln, deliver that speech as read, and it will make you president."² It is scarcely necessary to point out that this testimony—aside from the question of its dependability—contributes little to the question of the implications of the Springfield speech.

Lincoln always interpreted this Springfield utterance as an essay in the realm of prophecy. Prophets everywhere were scanning the political horizon, and some read the signs with the same prescience that time has shown that Lincoln

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 397 and note.

² *Ibid.*, p. 400. Herndon assumes that by this speech Lincoln "drove the nail into Seward's political coffin." But Lincoln's strength in 1860 was still clearly that of a middle-ground candidate. See also account of John Armstrong, in Lamon, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 398-99.

displayed. He held with Seward that the radically different political systems of the North and the South, separated by Mason and Dixon's line and its continuation, were headed for a collision. Both Seward and Lincoln prophesied that in due course the nation would "cease to be divided." Said Lincoln:

Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.

Seward was much more explicit; said he:

Either the cotton and rice fields of South Carolina and the sugar plantations of Louisiana will ultimately be tilled by free labor, and Charleston and New Orleans become marts for legitimate merchandise alone, or else the rye-fields and wheat-fields of Massachusetts and New York must again be surrendered by their farmers to slave culture and to the production of slaves, and Boston and New York become once more markets for trade in the bodies and souls of men.

Lincoln presumed that he was merely calling attention to two forces contending with each other for supremacy. He even assumed a certain degree of impartiality, if not indifference, to the outcome. "I did not even say that I desired that slavery should be put in course of ultimate extinction," he explained; in the favorable antislavery atmosphere of Chicago he could safely add: "I do say so now, however."¹ That the South was on the defensive and its "peculiar institution" threatened by forces in the North is perfectly clear; but were the free institutions of the North endangered to any such degree as suggested by both Lincoln and Seward?

Back of Lincoln's prophecy that slavery might come to be legalized in the northern free states as well as in the South, there seems to lie his reaction to two political cur-

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, III, 32.

rents. Openly and definitely he refers to a conspiracy in which the Supreme Court is the agency for the spread of slavery by judicial decision, not only into the territories but perhaps even "into the free states themselves."¹ The recent action of the Supreme Court in the case of Dred Scott was but one fragment of a mountain of evidence which revealed a design to make slavery national. He reasoned:

Put this and that together and we have another nice little niche, which we may, ere long, see filled with another Supreme Court decision, declaring that the Constitution of the United States does not permit a State to exclude slavery from its limits. . . . We shall lie down pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of making their State free, and we shall awake to the reality instead that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave State.

But would this be more than a victory for slavery in principle? Lincoln doubtless believed with Douglas and other public men of the day that negro slavery could never thrive in the West, as in the North, because of unfavorable crops and climatic conditions. This danger then in itself would scarcely seem to warrant Lincoln's deduction. Another factor was present, lurking in the background, perhaps, but influencing Lincoln, consciously or subconsciously, in his presentation of the struggle between slavery and freedom. This was his belief that nothing less was in danger than "the white man's charter of freedom, the declaration that 'all men are created free and equal.'"

This idea was first voiced by Lincoln in his famous eulogy on Henry Clay of July 16, 1852—perhaps the first speech to reveal in Lincoln the qualities of a great thinker and orator. He approved of Clay's position of middle ground between the abolitionists and the pro-slavery fire-eaters:

Those who would shiver into fragments the Union of these States, tear to tatters its now venerated Constitution, and even burn the last

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12; Gilbert A. Tracy, *Uncollected Letters of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 86.

copy of the Bible, rather than slavery should continue a single hour, together with all their more halting sympathizers, have received, and are receiving, their just execration; and the name and opinions and influence of Mr. Clay are fully and, as I trust, effectually and enduringly arrayed against them. But I would also, if I could, array his name, opinions, and influence against the opposite extreme—against a few but an increasing number of men who, for the sake of perpetuating slavery, are beginning to assail and to ridicule the white man's charter of freedom, the declaration that "all men are created free and equal."¹

The same train of thought ran through Lincoln's later utterances and writings. More and more clearly he saw the danger that came from the more fanatical advocates of slavery, as they tended to adopt offensive instead of defensive tactics. With the break-up of the Whig Party—that conservative bulwark against extremes of sectionalism—he saw his former associates, especially in the South, yielding more and more to their aversion to abolition fanaticism. This strengthened the hands of those who were advocating a defensive and offensive alliance of the forces of capitalism, North and South. It was to be an alignment of southern slavocracy and northern commercial and financial interests against enslaved labor in the South and the poorer orders of society in the North.² Southern ridicule of the white man's charter of freedom, of the declaration that "all men are created free and equal," found its echo in the North. Slavery was allying itself with plutocratic ideals and Lincoln felt the challenge of this development.³

In 1854 Lincoln showed his sense of obligation to this situation in various reflections. The challenge to the doc-

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, II, 172-73.

² The new manufacturing interests of the North had to be left out, because of the traditional opposition of southern sectionalists to the protectionist demands of the manufacturers.

³ See N. W. Stephenson, *Lincoln, an Account of His Personal Life, etc.* (Indianapolis, 1922), p. 77.

trine of equality aroused him to comment in a fragment on slavery: "Equality in society beats inequality," "whether the latter be of the British aristocratic sort or of the domestic slavery sort."¹ In another fragment on the same topic he drove home the logic of the defense of slavery on the basis of color, of intellectual inferiority, or of self-interest; he showed that this line of argument can be pushed to the point of justifying the enslavement of the person using it upon contact with a person of lighter complexion, or of mental superiority, or with a sense of greater power and the right of exploitation.² In a conversation at about the same time he stressed the danger that slavery might spread into Illinois and the northern states until at length the whole country would have adopted it. The essence of slavery—a point that commended it to some but that aroused Lincoln to indignation—seemed to be a scornful sense of superiority to labor.³

"The white man's charter of freedom," the Declaration of Independence, seemed threatened by a combination of forces in the North and South, and Lincoln brooded over the danger. In his well-known Peoria address, replying to Douglas on the Kansas-Nebraska issue, he pointed to the American gospel of liberty as the inspiration of "the liberal party throughout the world," and issued a solemn warning: "In our greedy chase to make profit of the negro, let us beware lest we 'cancel and tear to pieces' even the white man's charter of freedom."⁴

In a speech delivered at a Republican banquet in Chicago, December 10, 1856, Lincoln pointed out that a challenge had arisen to the necessary "central idea" in American political public opinion which until recently had been that of the founders of the nation—"the equality of men." He explained:

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, II, 184.

² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

³ Lamon, *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 346-47.

⁴ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, II, 247-48.

The late presidential election was a struggle by one party to discard that central idea and to substitute for it the opposite idea that slavery is right in the abstract, the workings of which as a central idea may be the perpetuity of human slavery and its extension to all countries and colors. Less than a year ago the Richmond "Enquirer," an avowed advocate of slavery, regardless of color, in order to favor his views, invented the phrase of "State equality," and now the President, in his message, adopts the "Enquirer's" catch-phrase."

He closed with an appeal to "reinaugurate the good old 'central ideas' of the republic," to renew the declaration that "all men are created equal."¹ Here then during the exact period when the "house divided" idea was taking form in Lincoln's mind, there was developing this fear for the "white man's charter of freedom."

Why did not Lincoln follow up this situation in his "house divided" speech? This is not an easy question to answer. His biblical text gave him an excellent foundation; what we find in the speech, however, is mainly a discussion of the danger to freedom from the leadership of Douglas and his party associates. But this was the immediate strategy of the situation. Douglas was facing the crisis of his career; he was at length encircled by his enemies, not only the Republicans but the Democratic machine and the National administration, with which he had been forced into a break; at the same time, he threatened by a brilliant stroke to win over the Republicans to his support.² Lincoln saw his opportunity and struck blow after blow upon his wily but

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, pp. 310-11.

² Horace Greeley was so impressed with Douglas' "gallant and successful struggle" against the fraud of the Lecompton constitution that he suggested that "not only magnanimity, but policy dictated to the Republicans of Illinois that they should promptly and heartily tender their support to Mr. Douglas, and thus insure his re-election for a third term with substantial unanimity."—Horace L. Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life* (New York, 1868), p. 357. See also Cole, *Era of the Civil War* (Springfield, 1919), pp. 157-61.

Indeed, Lincoln admitted in private to Herndon that Douglas, though "once a tool of the South," was "now its enemy."—Herndon and Weik, *Herndon's Lincoln*, II, 391.

weakening opponent. As a result, his "house divided" figure is a classic statement of the general logic of his position rather than a logical introduction to his combined attack upon Douglas and the Dred Scott Decision. It sounded the keynote of the Republican cause even though Lincoln turned abruptly to deal with the immediate situation at hand. Developed in Lincoln's mind long before the remainder of the speech, it stands in comparative isolation in the text of his speech.

Was it entirely fantastic to picture as an alternative to the ultimate extinction of negro servitude the possibility that slavery would establish itself in the domain of the North? Was this merely a "bogie" by which northerners might be frightened into the ranks of a party that stood unequivocally for the non-extension of slavery—a party that proclaimed by indirection that slavery was not even a necessary evil but a crime against humanity? Could evidence be cited to support this contention, which, however inadequate when judged in perspective by a scientific historian, might have bulked large in contemporary hopes and fears?

Lincoln had referred to "the increasing number of men who, for the sake of perpetuating slavery, are beginning to assail and ridicule the white man's charter of freedom, the declaration that 'all men are created free and equal.'" He was right. In his first warning in 1852 he added:

So far as I have learned, the first American of any note to do or attempt this was the late John C. Calhoun; and if I mistake not, it soon after found its way into some of the messages of the Governor of South Carolina.

He also pointed to a widely published letter of a "very distinguished and influential clergyman of Virginia" rejecting the maxim of Jefferson which had come to be "almost universally regarded as canonical authority." There was

now an increasing tendency among certain southerners to reject the equalitarian doctrines of the Declaration of Independence and substitute for it the philosophy that slavery was desirable for laborers generally. For, long before the day of Karl Marx, the concept of the "class struggle" found specific recognition on American soil.

What, indeed, was more natural than that the spokesman of the southern slavocrats should develop a political philosophy suitable to the protection of their interests? John C. Calhoun, the undisputed champion of southern rights in the earlier period of the sectional controversy, had such an underlying philosophy. In studying the history of the past, he claimed that he could not find "a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other." Continuing his reasoning, he stated:

There is and always has been in an advanced stage of wealth and civilization a conflict between labor and capital. The condition of society in the South exempts us from the disorders and dangers resulting from this conflict; and which explains why it is that the political situation of the slave-holding States has been so much more stable and quiet than that of the North.¹

In confidential talks with northern representatives of property and privilege, he condoled with them over their inability to repress the white laboring class, whose "number and disorderly temper will make them in the end efficient enemies of the men of property. . . . They will increase in influence and desperation until they overturn you." His inevitable conclusion was: "Slavery is indispensable to a republican government. There cannot be a durable republican government without slavery."²

¹ Calhoun, *Works*, II, 631, 632; see also *ibid.*, I, 56, 57.

² Chadwick, *Causes of the Civil War*, pp. 41, 42; see also Merriam, "Political Philosophy of John C. Calhoun," *Studies in Southern History and Politics*, pp. 329-30.

Lincoln's attention had also been drawn apparently to the message of Governor McDuffie, of South Carolina, and to later utterances of Governor Hammond. In the middle of the thirties, Governor McDuffie had officially declared his belief that slavery was the very cornerstone of the republic, that the laboring portion of any country, "bleached or unbleached," was a dangerous element in the body politic; he prophesied that twenty-five years would find the laboring people of the North virtually reduced to slavery.

The most logical development of a comprehensive system of thought in defense of slavery came from the *intelligentsia* of the South, from the teachers and the preachers. The outstanding influence was that of Thomas R. Dew, president of William and Mary College. By the middle of the thirties his reflections had taken on definite, if not permanent, form. He led his section in the bold repudiation of the equalitarian teachings of the Declaration of Independence, sacred in the South to the memory of Thomas Jefferson. With him was associated the Reverend William A. Smith, president of Randolph-Macon College, who first developed his ideas in a course of lectures on "Domestic Slavery in the United States," delivered to his classes in moral science. Additional co-workers were found, such as Professor P. H. Mills, of Mercer University, and other nameless figures who worked more quietly in the background.¹ Dew and his associates were frequently called upon to present their conclusions in addresses on various public occasions; in time they were widely distributed through the medium of the printed page.

¹ George Fitzhugh refers to "Professor H. of Virginia" as a keen and aggressive thinker along these lines. *Cannibals All! or, Slaves without Masters* (Richmond, 1857), pp. ix-xi. This may have been George F. Holmes—1846, professor of mathematics and natural science in Baptist College at Richmond; 1847-48, professor of economy, *belles-lettres*, and history at William and Mary; 1848-49, president of the University of Mississippi, from which he retired on account of ill health; 1857-97, professor of history and literature at the University of Virginia. See *South in the Building of the Nation* (13 vols., Richmond, 1909-13), XI, 505.

Dew led off in the attack upon the Jefferson creed of human equality. Soon the challenge was general. "The opponents of slavery," wrote Professor Mill, "lay much stress upon the dogma that all men are created free and equal. . . . I have no hesitation in pronouncing it false and absurd; and I have ample means of proving my assertion."¹ Or, as President Smith put it: "To be 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' in unequal and subordinate positions, *to the few*, has been the lot of mankind from the time of Adam. . . . Inequality among men is the will of God."² The Reverend Thornton Stringfellow, of Richmond, Virginia, undertook to prove that the biblical statutes "show, very clearly, that our Creator is the *author* of social, moral, and political inequality among men."³ According to Chancellor Harper, the distinguished South Carolina jurist, slavery was "a principal cause" of civilization: "Slavery alone is adequate to form man to habits of labor. . . . He who has obtained command of another's labor, first begins to accumulate and provide for the future, and the foundations of civilization are laid."⁴ This unequivocal doctrine of class inequality was a gospel of government by and for the privileged few, not for the sake of government but for the sake of privilege and its protection. The significant point was that men like Calhoun were ready to apply their doctrine to the free as well as to the slave states. Calhoun wished to bolster up the institution of slavery by appealing to the privileged groups of the North to see that they were no less interested in "taking from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned."

¹ P. H. Mill, *Slavery: a Treatise Showing That Slavery Is Neither a Moral, Political, nor Social Evil* (Penfield, Georgia, 1844).

² William A. Smith, *Lectures on the Philosophy and Practice of Slavery* (Nashville, 1856), pp. 62, 63.

³ Thornton Stringfellow, *Scriptural and Statistical View of Slavery*, p. 97.

⁴ William Harper *et al.*, *Pro-slavery Argument* (Charleston, 1852), pp. 3-4.

He wanted to strengthen the social line of cleavage, frankly admitting that it would doom thousands of northerners to generations of poverty and ignorance.

In palliation of their own "peculiar institution," southern propagandists sometimes shed crocodile tears over the pitiful condition of northern "slaves without masters." They drew heart-rending pictures of men, women, and children engaged in prolonged monotonous toil under intolerable conditions and for starvation wages. They pointed to the wrecks of northern "free" industrial civilization in the almshouses and asylums. Northern capitalism, they held, was slavery under the guise of freedom. For argumentative purposes they would admit that if slavery was a crime against humanity, it ought to be abolished everywhere and in every form; believing it a positive blessing, however, their logic covered a defense of even the "wages-slavery" of northern industrialism. Define slavery as a system which compels one man to support another out of the product of his labor, and Calhoun and his followers were propagandists for slavery regardless of race, color, or crime. And so many southerners defined it.¹

The apostles of negro slavery often conceded that the white slavery that prevailed in the North was the more profitable because the capitalist master had all of the advantages and none of the burdens of the ordinary slave-owner. They consoled themselves by pointing to the greater stability of their institution, and altruistically referred to the more generous treatment and to the greater contentment of

¹ "If I should venture on a definition, I should say that where a man is compelled to labor at the will of another, and to give him much the greater portion of the product of his labor, there *Slavery* exists; and it is immaterial by what sort or compulsion the will of the laborer is subdued."—Harper, *Pro-slavery Argument*, p. 52. "A *system* of slavery is a state or order of things established by law or custom, in which one set of men are the masters to a given extent, and another are slaves to that extent," said President Smith, *Philosophy and Practice of Slavery*, p. 39. See also Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All or, Slaves without Masters*, pp. 25 ff.

the negro slave. They realized also that northern capitalism and southern slavery rested upon a common foundation. "We find," said one after a stinging criticism of northern industrialism, "that we shall have to defend the North as well as the South against the assaults of the abolitionist."¹ Indeed, their most serious criticism of nominally free society seemed to be that it lacked a guaranty of stability. In America as in Europe discontent seemed to lurk among the propertyless masses who, "tantalized with the name of freedom," were already challenging the control of the privileged governing class. Chancellor Harper commented:

That they are called free undoubtedly aggravates the suffering of the slaves of other regions. They see the economic inequality which exists, and feel their own misery, and can hardly conceive otherwise than that there is some injustice in the institutions of society to occasion these. They regard the apparently more fortunate class as oppressors. . . . They feel indignity more acutely, and more of discontent is excited; they feel that it is mockery that calls them free. Men do not so much hate and envy those who are separated from them by a wide distance, and some apparently impossible barrier, as those who approach nearer to their own condition, and with whom they habitually bring themselves into comparison.²

The logic of this argument meant that the South had less reason to fear servile insurrection than the North had to fear social revolution.³ Governor J. H. Hammond, of South Carolina, thought in 1845 that the specter of revolt was on the very threshold of the North. Said he, closing the thesis that no society had ever existed without social classes:

Though intelligence and wealth have great influence here [in the United States] as elsewhere, in keeping in check reckless and unen-

¹ Fitzhugh, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

² Harper, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

³ *Ibid.* See also W. Gilmore Sims, "The Morals of Slavery" in same volume, pp. 205-7, 221: "Perhaps there is nothing in the world that the people of the South less apprehend, than this, of the insurrection of their negroes." See also "Professor Dew on Slavery" in the same volume, pp. 462 ff.

lightened numbers, yet it is evident to close observers, if not to all, that those are rapidly usurping all power in the non-slave-holding states, and threaten a fearful crisis in Republican institutions and that at no remote period.

He prophesied that it would not be long before the free states would be compelled to introduce the standing army to overawe the rampant and combatant "spirit of discontent wherever nominal Free Labor prevails, with its extensive privileges and its dismal servitude."¹

At about the same time a Georgia prophet uttered the same warning; he was doubtful that

Our Northern friends have any way to avoid the anarchy toward which they are fast tending. . . . There is, at the present time, in the States north of Maryland, a well organized party, numbering in *a single city*, some thousands of voters, *who are in favor of an equal division of property*, and most clamorously demand it. Thanks to our system of domestic servitude, such influences cannot exist in our midst.²

President Smith also pointed to "the agrarian doctrines which find embodiment in various social organizations in the free States."

Nothing but that religion which both teaches the duty and imparts the moral power to "be careful for nothing, but in everything to give thanks," and in every condition in which Divine Providence places us, "therewith to be content," can reconcile a white menial to his condition in such a country as ours.³

Dew had pointed out the logic of the situation as early as 1836:

Domestic slavery, such as ours, is the only institution which I know of that can secure the spirit of equality among free men, so necessary to the true and genuine feeling of republicanism, without propping the body politic at the same time into the dangerous vices of

¹ Governor Hammond's *Letters on Southern Slavery; Addressed to Thomas Clarkson, the English Abolitionist* (1845), pp. 5, 6.

² Mill, *Slavery: a Treatise*, pp. 33-34.

³ Smith, *Lectures on the Philosophy and Practice of Slavery*, pp. 222-23.

agrarianism and legislative intermeddling between the laborer and the capitalist.¹

A worthy South Carolina clergyman restated Dew's proposition of eliminating the conflict of interest between capital and labor by making labor and capital one and the same, as follows:

The institution of slavery, then, ever has been and ever will be the only sure foundation of all Republican governments. And its conservative influence in favor of republicanism does not consist chiefly in the curtailment of universal suffrage, but in the almost unobserved fact of uniting capital and labor. It is this peaceful trait of the institution of slavery that constitutes it a leading ingredient in the best social state. . . . For where this sort of slavery exists as the basis of the social state, all clashing between capitalists and laborers is excluded and the wheels of government work smoothly; and contentment and peace must be most likely to reign in the bosom of such society.²

Such southern spokesmen hailed the argument of an English student of economics and sociology that "slavery and content, and liberty and discontent, are the natural results of each other," that the only way to solve the complicated problems of modern industrial society would be to *enslave* all the people who did not possess property.³

President Dew, the pioneer in this field and doubtless the ablest of this group of philosophers, was fully alive to the revolutionary implications of his defense of slavery. In an address published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1836,

¹ *Southern Literary Messenger*, II, 277.

² He prophesied on this basis the predestined failure of the French Republic and of the non-slaveholding states if controlled by the friends of freedom. "A Defense of Southern Slavery against the Attacks of Henry Clay and Alexander Campbell," by a southern clergyman (Hamburg, South Carolina, 1851), pp. 44, 45.

³ See "Slavery, the Only Remedy for the Miseries of the English Poor," by "a philanthropist," from *Jerrold's Magazine*, in Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All or, Slaves without Masters*, pp. 228, 233.

he forecasts the spread of slavery into the West and North and concludes:

Expediency, morality and religion alike demand its continuance; and perhaps I would not hazard too much in the prediction that the day will come when the whole confederacy [the United States] will regard it as the sheet anchor of our country's liberty.¹

Dew too thought that the whole country must become "all slave or all free," but he thought the outcome would be the general prevalence of slavery.

This fundamental philosophy of the southern *intelligentsia* was taken up and popularized by the more aggressive political leaders of the South, especially by those of the school of Rhett, Yancey, and Davis. Like the philosophers, the politicians considered that the best defensive tactics for the South were those of a vigorous offensive. This gospel was preached from the stump, in legislative halls, and at times even from the gubernatorial chair. The conservative southern planter might continue to pride himself on his conservative opposition to agitation, but the clamor for a more adequate recognition of southern rights was raised with increasing vigor and intensity as the sectional controversy approached the crisis of 1860.

Perhaps the most versatile and the most provocative of these southern spokesmen in the fifties was George Fitzhugh, of Port Caroline, Virginia. Residing in the rural isolation of a small community in tidewater Virginia, he courageously took up the cudgel and assumed an offensive in behalf of the "peculiar institution" of the South quite without a parallel in the antebellum period. He must at length be accredited with his proper rôle in the slavery controversy.² In the

¹ *Southern Literary Messenger*, II, 277; W. E. Dodd, "Contributions of the South to Economic Thought and Writing to 1865," *South in the Building of the Nation*, V, 571.

² Such standard writers as James Ford Rhodes and Albert Bushnell Hart (in his *Slavery and Abolition*) fail even to mention Fitzhugh and his writings.

early forties he "became satisfied that slavery, *black or white*, was right and necessary." He was soon advocating "this doctrine in very many essays; sometimes editorially [as a newspaper publisher] and sometimes as a communicant."¹ He undertook to arouse the South into taking "higher ground in defense of Slavery; justifying it as a normal and natural institution, instead of excusing and apologizing for it, as an exceptional one."² A series of his articles appeared, 1849-51, in the Fredericksburg *Democratic Recorder* and in the *Richmond Examiner*; these he brought together and circulated in pamphlet form under the title, "Slavery Justified." Next he brought out, in 1854, his *Sociology for the South*, dedicated "To the People of the South," and finally in 1857, his *Cannibals All! or Slaves without Masters*, dedicated to Governor Henry A. Wise, of Virginia.

He professed the greatest respect for the abolitionists, whose sincerity and ability he ungrudgingly acknowledged. In his visits to the North he established friendly personal relations with Gerrit Smith, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, and other antislavery crusaders. Indeed, he states that in his visit of 1855 he "only associated with distinguished Abolitionists."³ He read "many of their books, lectures, essays, and speeches," and published his letter of regrets to William Lloyd Garrison that "your very able paper reaches me irregularly."⁴ "The Liberty party is composed of very able men—of philosophers and philanthropists," he told his fellow-southerners; he was indebted to these reformers, he shrewdly pointed out, because "they have demonstrated, beyond a doubt, that slavery is necessary, unless they can get up a Millennium, or discover a new Social Science."⁵ In other words, he applauded and accepted their socialistic indictment of the general prevalence of

¹ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, p. 225.

³ Fitzhugh, *ibid.*, p. xvi.

² Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All!* p. xiii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

slavery, including "slavery to capital," but rejected their remedy as absurd and impracticable. "Their destructive philosophy is profound, demonstrative, and unanswerable—their constructive theories, wild, visionary, and chimerical on paper, and failures in practice."¹ Writing to one of those reformers whose attention had been drawn to Fitzhugh's publications by citations in northern papers, the nimble southern protagonist applied the logic of this argument: "Should you not, therefore, abolish your form of society, and adopt ours, until Mr. Greeley, or Brigham Young, or Mr. Andrews, or Mr. Goodell, or some other socialist of Europe or America, invents and puts into successful practice a social organization better than either, or until the millennium [*sic*] does actually arrive?"² Or, as he more boldly and perhaps more ironically put it in another connection: "Slavery is a form of communism, and as the Abolitionists and Socialists have resolved to adopt a new social system, we recommend it to their consideration."³

Yet, knowing that the abolitionists were sincerely attached to their ideals, Fitzhugh accorded them recognition as honest and worthy opponents. "We live in a dangerous crisis," he wrote Garrison, "and every patriot and philanthropist should set aside all false delicacy in the earnest pursuit of truth. I believe Slavery natural, necessary, indispensable. You think it inexpedient, immoral, and criminal. Neither of us should withhold any facts that will enable the public to form correct opinions."⁴ He frankly warned the northern propagandist that his new book was about to demonstrate "that every theoretical abolitionist at the North is a Socialist or Communist, and proposes or approves radi-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

² *Ibid.*, p. 153. He concluded with the assurance: "I am quite as intent on abolishing Free Society, as you are on abolishing slavery."

³ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

cal changes in the organization of society.”¹ He served the same notice upon Horace Greeley and challenged him to correct any specious reasoning. “’Tis not possible that our two forms of society can long coexist. . . . Social systems, formed on opposite principles, cannot endure,”² he concluded, forecasting the message with which Lincoln was to startle the world less than two years later.

In picturing the cause of the abolitionist as logically a crusade for social revolution, North as well as South, Fitzhugh sought to arouse the northern capitalist to a sense of the essential community of interest between the vested interests of the nation, regardless of section. “Have we not shown . . . that the North has as much to apprehend from abolition as the South, and that it is time for conservatives everywhere to unite in efforts to suppress and extinguish it?”³ he asked. He elaborated this point in a final chapter entitled, “Warning to the North.” He insisted:

A like danger threatens North and South, proceeding from the same source. Abolitionism is maturing what Political Economy began. . . . Men once fairly committed to negro slavery agitation—once committed to the sweeping principle, “that man being a moral agent, accountable to God for his actions, should not have those actions controlled and directed by the will of another,” are, in effect, committed to Socialism and communism, to the most ultra doctrines of Garrison, Goodell, Smith and Andrews—to no private property, no church, no law, no government—to free love, free lands, free women and free churches.⁴

¹ Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All!* p. 154.

² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 359, 368. It is significant that this danger of revolution was pointed out by other southerners. “It is not the South alone that is interested in this momentous question. The same torch (lit by abolitionists of the North) that will consume our humble cottages of the South will also cause the Northeastern horizon to corruscate with the flames of Northern palaces,” wrote W. H. Underwood to Howell Cobb, February 4, 1844. U. B. Phillips [ed.], *Correspondence of Toombs, Stephens, and Cobb, American Historical Association Report*, 1911, Washington, 1913, II, 54. D. R. Hundley, in his *Social Relations of our Southern States* (New York, 1860), pp. 281-82, issued a warning to the northern capitalist that, in sympathizing with the antislavery movement, he was harboring “an

His warning shifted into another appeal for common cause:

In the South, the interest of the governing class is eminently conservative, and the South is fast becoming the most conservative of nations. . . . We think that by a kind of alliance, offensive and defensive, with the South, Northern Conservatism may now arrest and turn back the tide of Radicalism and Agrarianism.¹

He held that there was only one kind of force that would sustain a government—"‘inside necessity,’ such as slavery, that occasions a few to usurp power, and to hold it forcibly, without consulting the many. . . . The mass of mankind cannot be governed by Law. More of despotic discretion, and less of Law, is what the world wants."² Again, Fitzhugh was moved to proclaim a "house divided" doctrine: "There is no middle ground—not an inch of ground of any sort, between that doctrine which we hold and those which Mr. Garrison holds. If slavery, either white or black, be wrong in principle or practice, then is Mr. Garrison right—then is all human government wrong."³ Or, as he had stated the case in 1854:

We deem this peculiar question of negro slavery of very little importance. The issue is made throughout the world on the general subject of slavery in the abstract. The argument has commenced. One set of ideas will govern and control after awhile the civilized world. Slavery will everywhere be abolished, or everywhere be re-instituted.⁴

Here was a bold spirit, ready to combat abolitionism by attacking the very foundations of free society. Here was a direct proposal to the vested interests of the North to assume an allied offensive against "northern radicalism." And

add that in time will turn upon you and sting you. . . . You in urging the rights of negro slave workmen are giving arguments which will react upon you as employers of white 'free' workmen in the North. . . . Unconsciously to yourself you have been advocating all the time only a new species of agrarianism. Your laborers already wonder, why you so rich and they so poor? What will you do when they demand equal distribution of wealth with you?"

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 356-57.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 360-61.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

⁴ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, p. 94.

Fitzhugh was only one of many such protagonists of slavery. The average slaveholder might content himself with defending his property in slaves by pointing to the obvious apparent inferiority of the Negro race; but Fitzhugh and his associates insisted upon carrying out the theories of Dew to their logical conclusion. On the basis of logic and of scriptural and historical precedent, they were vindicating the institution of slavery in the abstract, with little of special pleading for negro servitude. They exerted a powerful influence upon the South. Fitzhugh's contributions were published in the *Richmond Enquirer*, in *De Bow's Review*, in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and extensively in citation. His *Sociology for the South* was reviewed by his friend, Professor H., of Virginia, in the *Literary Messenger* for March, 1855. The essays of Dew, Harper, Simms, and others were gathered together and published in 1852 in a volume entitled *The Pro-slavery Argument*; it was given wide circulation over the South. Eight years later a similar compilation, entitled *Cotton Is King*, was issued to the public. Informally the new pro-slavery propaganda was taken up in the southern press and exploited in new terms and in new forms.

Meantime, no adequate refutation had come from across Mason and Dixon's line. Fitzhugh sent his letters and publications into the North with his stirring challenge. He restated it in articles in the *New York Day Book*. He went to Yale in 1856 and lectured with some acclaim on the failure of free society. And still no response! He commented in 1856:

Piqued and taunted for two years by many Southern Presses of standing, to deny the proposition that Free Society in Western Europe is a failure, and that it betrays premonitory symptoms of failure even in America, the North is silent, and thus tacitly admits the charge.¹

¹ Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All!* p. xv. The real explanation of this silence is probably to be found in the fact that the pro-slavery argument still attracted relatively little attention out of the limits of the slaveholding states themselves. See complaint of Chancellor Harper, *Pro-slavery Argument*, p. 2.

The North was not entirely silent. Indeed, it was becoming aroused by these taunts as all the efforts of the abolitionists had failed to arouse it. The abolitionists had early recognized, as Birney put it, that the real issue at stake as much concerned the white man and his hope of continued liberty as it did the liberation of the enslaved African, that the enslavement of one race involved the ultimate essential enslavement of the other.¹ The idealistic reformers, on the one hand, and the spokesman of class-conscious labor, on the other, had long insisted upon the common enemy of "wages slavery and chattel slavery." Indeed, a Horace Greeley could feel justified in abstaining from participation in a certain antislavery meeting because its backers seemed to fail to oppose slavery in all its forms.² But while visionary labor leaders and reformers might even consider that the problem of "wages slavery" was as serious as that of negro slavery, this was the ineffective appeal of abstract logic to the average citizen of the North; it was readily discounted as part of the propaganda of misguided fanatics.

Quite different was the response when the northerner was brought face to face with a southern argument to subject all labor to servile exploitation. None the less abstract, he could envisage this danger. It mattered not that a logician like Fitzhugh could explain that slavery for whites would be milder than negro slavery, and intended for the protection of the less fortunate social groups—that it could be no worse than northern industrialism, and ought to involve a paternalistic improvement.³ Nor was the southern popularizer of Fitzhugh likely to make such distinctions. Accord-

¹ Jesse Macy, *The Anti-slavery Crusade*, p. 67. Fitzhugh declared that social revolution was their "real object—negro emancipation a mere gull-trap."—*Cannibals All!* pp. 368, 369.

² John R. Commons, *Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (11 vols., Cleveland, 1910-11), VII, 211-16. Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 351-52.

³ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, pp. 94-95; *Cannibals All!* p. 359.

ingly, the warning in the North was sounded in the election of 1856, the first test in national politics of the Republican Party. The northern press reprinted with warning finger the ultra pro-slavery arguments. Pamphlets appeared with quotations from the southern press.¹ One of wide circulation was entitled: "*The new 'Democratic' doctrine. Slavery not to be confined to the negro race, but to be made the universal condition of the laboring classes of society. The supporters of this doctrine vote for Buchanan!*"

Lincoln's warning of 1852 against pro-slavery propagandists who were ready to assail "the white man's charter of freedom" is one of the earliest instances of northern anxiety over the position of the southern extremists. He must have been keenly sensitive to these forces that were beginning to operate in the South; his mind seems to have dwelt often in the years that followed upon the problem that was thus raised. Lincoln's interest in the slavery controversy led to a careful consideration of the literature on both sides. Herndon preserves the following pregnant facts:

Lincoln and I took such papers as the *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Tribune*, *Anti-Slavery Standard*, *Emancipator*, and *National Era*. On the other side of the question we took the *Charleston Mercury* and the *Richmond Enquirer*. I also bought a book called "Sociology," written by one Fitzhugh, which defended and justified slavery in every conceivable way. In addition I purchased all the leading histories of the slavery movement, and other works which treated on that subject. Lincoln himself never bought many books, but he and I read those I have named.²

The specific mention of Fitzhugh and his *Sociology for the South* probably reflects the strong impress made upon Herndon and his law partner by the drastic logic of the southern protagonist.

¹ Frank T. Carleton, *Organized Labor in American History* (New York, 1920), p. 147.

² Herndon and Weik, *Herndon's Lincoln*, II, 363.

The warnings of the Republican press and of party pamphleteers doubtless re-enforced Lincoln's reactions to the doctrines of southern extremists. The material had come too closely to hand to fail to influence the enthusiastic champion of the American gospel of liberty. Numerous examples of the southern philosophy of class superiority were clipped by the Republican editors in Illinois, on the assumption that they contained their own refutation, and that their arrogance would do damage to the southern cause. As early as March of 1854 the *Belleville Advocate* had called attention to an address by Taber, one of the editors of the *Charleston Mercury*, in which he had held up slavery as the natural and best condition of labor, and had pointed to France and the northern states as instancing the necessity of slavery in republics; the *Advocate* rejoiced in the news that Taber had been honored in return by being burned in effigy by the indignant mechanics of the capital of his own state. Other items appeared in the course of the campaign of 1856 when Lincoln was busy on the hustings in behalf of the Republican candidate.¹

Shortly before the Lincoln-Douglas contest of 1858, Lincoln's home paper, the Springfield *Illinois State Journal*, began to take up this line of attack. In a single issue of October 28, 1857, the *Journal* submitted an alleged South Carolina journalistic effort and an item purporting to come from the well-known *Richmond Enquirer*. Said the former:

Slavery is the natural and normal condition of the laboring man, whether white or black. The great evil of Northern free society is that it is burdened with a servile class of mechanics and laborers, unfit for self-government, and yet clothed with the attributes and powers of citizens. Master and slave is a relation in society as natural and necessary as parent and child; and the Northern States will yet have to introduce it.

¹ See Marshall, *Eastern Illinoisan*, May 24; *Chicago Daily Democratic Press*, June 2, 1856.

The *Enquirer* article supported the same view:

Until recently the defense of slavery has labored under great difficulties, because its apologists took half-way grounds. They confined the defense of slavery to mere negro slavery, thereby giving up the principle, admitting other forms of slavery to be wrong.

The line of defense, however, is now changed. The South now maintains that slavery is right, natural and necessary, and does not depend upon the difference in complexion. The laws of the slave States justify the holding of white men in bondage.¹

Here was certainly an echo of the doctrine of Dew and Fitzhugh. But the danger was more than a mere figment of the now supersensitized imaginations of Republican politicians. To be sure, the issue would become serious only when northerners would take up the cudgel for this southern doctrine. But that moment seemed at hand. On September 16, 1854, Dumas J. Van Deren, of Charleston, Illinois, forwarded a communication to the *Charleston (S.C.) Courier* in which he declared himself and many other southerners, resident in Illinois long enough to test the comparative advantages that free and slave systems present,

prepared to pronounce openly our full and candid preference in favor of slave labor in agricultural business. . . . We have discovered that the novelty of free labor is a mere humbug. . . . We have been endeavoring to learn the sentiments of our people upon this subject, and have been astonished to see with what unanimity they express themselves in favor of the introduction of slave labor. I have conversed with many of our best farmers who were raised in the eastern States, and they will give their hearty co-operation in effecting this object.

He therefore proposed to carry this question to the ballot box in a movement to repeal the slavery prohibition of the

¹ The same item was clipped by the *Chicago Daily Democratic Press*, June 2, 1856, supposedly from the *Marshall Eastern Illinoisan*, May 24, where it appeared as an unidentified contribution. These editorials were published in one of the pamphlets used as campaign documents by the Republicans. See Carleton *Organized Labor in American History*, p. 147.

state constitution. He called upon southerners to turn emigrants to Illinois, instead of Kansas: "Send your young men here, who can remain here and vote. . . . If by our united efforts we shall be able to carry our point, the southern people will possess the key to the western world, the richest portion of the American continent."

This letter was widely copied, in southern journals and in northern antislavery organs. The Jackson *Mississippian* welcomed Van Deren's proposal. It declared:

Establish slavery in Illinois and it would give us the key to the great West. The South should not content herself with maintaining her ground; she should progress. She should expand her institutions wherever soil, climate, and productions are adapted to them.¹

In the spring of 1858, Van Deren became editor of the *Matoon National Gazette*, an administration, anti-Douglas organ. It was not long before the Republican press was again able to proclaim him as the advocate of slavery in Illinois. The *Illinois State Journal* promptly quoted two items. In one Van Deren submitted:

We candidly and firmly believe today that if Illinois were a slave state, the best men of Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, and even states farther South, would be here as soon as they could remove their families, and the prairies of Illinois would be made to smile as a lovely garden.²

Lincoln, seeking an opportunity to return from his political seclusion, must thoughtfully have studied all these developments. He, a believer in the dignity of labor and in the rights of labor, sympathized with the growing feeling of northern wage-earners that slavery was a menace to them

¹ *Mississippian*, October 20, in *Alton Weekly Courier*, November 30, 1854.

² See *Illinois State Journal*, August 26, September 2, 1857. Cf. *Urbana Union*, April 30, August 20, 27, October 29, 1857. The resourcefulness of the Republican press seemed to limit its use of this opportunity to the charge that Van Deren's appeal was the logical position of all responsible elements in the Democratic Party, even in the North; this charge a number of Democratic organs promptly refuted.

individually and as a class. He was also no mean political strategist. His Springfield speech accepting the Republican senatorial nomination was a carefully prepared effort, but directed, in its formal logic, against the leadership of Douglas—so much so that he failed to make entirely clear what might have been the implications of his “house divided” reference. If a sense of the larger conflict between slavery and freedom served as a subconscious factor in Lincoln’s historic statement, he did not recur to it in the formal utterances of the campaign. In the less formal phase of his work on the hustings, however—in his tour of the towns and villages of Illinois—he addressed the electorate without the complicating presence of his great rival. There he had an opportunity to make use of the contents of a campaign notebook filled with newspaper clippings; among other items he had filed away in this scrapbook a number of the ultra-pro-slavery items clipped from the *Illinois State Journal*.¹ He was closely in touch with the editorial policy of the *Journal*, and he may even have inspired the republication of the alleged outbursts of southern fanaticism. At any rate, the evidence points to a frequent and effective exploitation of such items before the voters of Illinois.²

In the stirring events of the years that followed, Lincoln faced in a more concrete way the issues of the sectional controversy. But in his first annual message of December 3, 1861, he turned to the fundamental issues of the war that was raging:

¹ This campaign notebook is now in the possession of Mr. Jesse Weik of Greencastle, Indiana, and throws interesting light on this question. See Weik, *The Real Lincoln, a Portrait* (Boston, 1922), pp. 9-11.

² In October, at the very climax of the Lincoln-Douglas contest, an article appeared in *De Bow's Review* urging the reopening of the slave trade and “the introduction of our peculiar institution into western States and Territories.”—*De Bow's Review*, XXV, 393 ff. The *Illinois State Journal* promptly, on November 3, 1858, brought this article to the attention of the excited electorate.

It continues to develop that the insurrection is largely, if not exclusively, a war upon the principle of popular government—the rights of the people. . . . It is not needed nor fitting here that a general argument should be made in favor of popular institutions; but there is one point, with its connections, not so hackneyed as most others, to which I ask brief attention. It is the effort to place capital on an equal footing, if not above, labor, in the structure of government. It is assumed that labor is available only in connection with capital; that nobody labors unless somebody else, owning capital, somehow by the use of it induces him to labor. This assumed, it is next considered whether it is best that capital should hire laborers, and thus induce them to work by their own consent, or buy them, and drive them to it without their consent. Having proceeded thus far, it is naturally concluded that all laborers are either hired laborers or what we call slaves. And, further, it is assumed that whoever is once a hired laborer is fixed in that condition for life.

Now, there is no such relation between capital and labor as assumed, nor is there such a thing as a free man being fixed for life in the condition of a hired laborer. Both assumptions are false, and all inferences from them are groundless.

Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. . . . ¹

On March 21, 1864, in accepting honorary membership in a workingmen's association of New York, Lincoln welcomed the recognition of the principle "that the existing rebellion means more, and tends to more, than the perpetuation of African slavery—that it is, in fact, a war upon the rights of all workingmen."² He quoted at length his message of 1861 as evidence of his belief in that principle; later in his letter he stated: "The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations and tongues, and kindreds."

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, II, 104-5.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 501-2.

If one takes Lincoln's "house divided" analogy and sets it alongside of similar expressions emanating from ultra-pro-slavery propagandists, it seems to raise a fundamental issue of class relationships. As a simple excursion into the realm of prophecy bearing upon the institution of domestic slavery it was fulfilled in less than a decade. But is the historical student of today able to assign to Lincoln a larger importance in this rôle as prophet? Was Lincoln also accepting the challenge of the southron's "class struggle" concept to the extent of restating that social philosophy in terms that would reach the understanding—and fears—of the humble citizen of the North? Time may bring an answer to this pregnant question, just as it may accomplish something toward an adequate solution of the larger riddle of the "class struggle." Is it, meantime, too much to ask whether Lincoln may not have made a contribution to the historical development of this unorthodox philosophy of history?

